
Urban Revitalization: Public Toilet Alternatives for the East Village and the Downtown

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Table of Contents

1.0	Introduction	3
1.1	Why is the provision of public toilets crucial?	3
1.2	What is the public toilet situation in the East Village?	5
2.0	Report Objectives and Methodology	8
2.1	Objectives	8
2.2	Resources	9
2.3	Case Studies	9
	2.3.1 The Case of Vancouver	10
3.0	Public Toilet Alternatives	11
3.1	Short Term: Street Cleaning	11
	3.1.1 Definition	11
	3.1.2 Practices in Various Cities	11
	3.1.3 Advantages	12
	3.1.4 Disadvantages and Issues	12
	3.1.5 Cost and Financing	13
	3.1.6 Additional Resources	13
3.2	Short Term: Portable Toilets	14
	3.2.1 Definition	14
	3.2.2 Practices in Various Cities	14
	3.2.3 Advantages	15
	3.2.4 Disadvantages and Issues	15
	3.2.5 Cost and Financing	16
	3.2.6 Additional Resources	16
3.3	Mid Term: Hotel Facilities	17
	3.3.1 Definition	17
	3.3.2 Practices in Various Cities	17
	3.3.3 Advantages	18
	3.3.4 Disadvantages and Issues	18
	3.3.5 Cost and Financing	18
	3.3.6 Additional Resources	18
3.4	Long Term: Supervised Public Toilets	19
	3.4.1 Definition	19
	3.4.2 Practices in Various Cities	19
	3.4.3 Advantages	21
	3.4.4 Disadvantages and Issues	22
	3.4.5 Cost and Financing	22
	3.4.6 Additional Resources	23
3.5	Long Term: Hygiene Centers/Toilet Palaces	24
	3.5.1 Definition	24
	3.5.2 Practices in Various Cities	24
	3.5.3 Advantages	25
	3.5.4 Disadvantages and Issues	26
	3.5.5 Cost and Funding	26
	3.5.6 Additional Resources	27
3.6	Long Term: Automatic Public Toilets (APTs)	28
	3.6.1 Definition	28
	3.6.2 Practices in Various Cities	28
	3.6.3 Advantages	29
	3.6.4 Disadvantages and Issues	29
	3.6.5 Cost and Financing	30
	3.6.6 Additional Resources	31
3.7	Long Term: The UriLift	32
	3.7.1 Definition	32
	3.7.2 Practices in Various Cities	32
	3.7.3 Advantages	33
	3.7.4 Disadvantages and Issues	33
	3.7.5 Cost and Financing	33
	3.7.6 Additional Resources	34
4.0	Conclusion	35
5.0	Sources Cited	36
6.0	Summary Table of Public Toilet Alternatives	40

1.0 Introduction



a.



b.



c.



d.

Top to bottom:

a. 6th Avenue SE, East Village, Calgary

b. Example of a back lane in the East Village

c. Olympic Plaza public toilets entrance, Calgary

d. Interior of Olympic Plaza ladies' washroom

1.1 Why is the provision of public toilets crucial?

There is a noticeable shortage of public toilets in major Canadian cities and Calgary is no exception. This presents a particularly dire situation for homeless populations who may otherwise face discrimination in accessing toilet facilities in commercial centers and dining establishments, have limited toilet alternatives at nighttime, and for those who have heroin addictions and subsequently, digestive organ malfunctions, which make the need for a toilet immediate.

Cities such as Calgary, Montréal, Edmonton, Halifax, Winnipeg, and Toronto do not have public toilets intended specifically for the use of homeless persons but many are now addressing the issue as an urgent need (A. Bielow; Customer Services, City of Winnipeg; S. Haslam; G. Léveque; B. Nehiley; personal communication, June 24 & 27, July 7 & 8, 2005). The toilets that do exist are generally found in parks, civic centers, and homeless shelters, but are often closed at nighttime and there is not a great enough concentration of public toilets available over a given area to fulfill demand.

Part of the problem is that public toilets are not often regarded as priorities: they are often seen as amenities rather than necessities and as design features that are

taken into account a considerable period after a built environment has been built or redeveloped. Cost is another issue. It is acknowledged that public toilets rarely pay for themselves and budget constraints are generally cited as the main barrier to providing public toilets (Greed, 2003a).

However, the provision of public toilets is a far-reaching issue and is crucial for the following reasons:

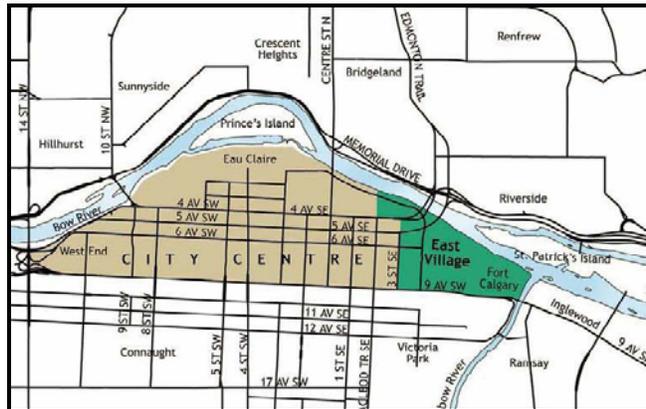
1. Public toilets are a basic human need and right: as advocates for inclusive toilet design argue, “to relieve yourself without breaking the social conventions which surround the act can be understood as a denial of your rights to participate in social life with dignity” (Kitchin and Law, 2000);
2. A lack of accessible and hygienic public toilets poses a public health threat: human waste in public spaces presents the risk of increased viral and bacterial disease transmission throughout a population;
3. Public toilets not only serve homeless populations but add to the ability of urban centers to become more user-friendly for the greater population, including outside commuters and tourists. In other words, they are “community capital” (Greed, 2003a);
4. Public toilets have been proven to “make areas more attractive and facilitate regeneration...improve urban design, and contribute to sustainability.”¹ They can increase an area’s “social attractiveness and eventually, its economic viability.” They can also “increase confidence to invest in [an] area” (Greed, 2003a); and
5. ‘Toilet provision is a land use matter and not purely “social”, and therefore a planning matter, because it affects the way people use land’ and cities (Greed, 2003a).²

¹ In addition, Professor of Inclusive Urban Planning, Clara Greed, argues that the provision of public toilets in neighbourhoods restores civic pride, make places more attractive to invest in, makes the built environment more accessible (e.g. for people with small children, the disabled), and increases use of public transportation.

² For a more detailed argument on the intersections between planning and public toilets, please see Clara Greed’s book [Inclusive Public Design: Public Toilets](#), pages 133-154.

1.2 What is the public toilet situation in the East Village?

The East Village is a community located in the downtown of Calgary, Canada. As of 2005, the East Village had a homeless population of 1045 people in a total population of 2080 people (City of Calgary Land Use Planning & Policy Planning, 2005). 63.4% of the population in 2000 lived in low-income households compared to an average of 14.9% in the rest of the city (City of Calgary Community Strategies, 2000).



Map of the East Village

Defecation and urination or “lane going” in public spaces are becoming pressing issues in the East Village. A typical walk around the area can provide visual evidence of this. According to Cynthia Alanen of the City’s Roads Maintenance Division, Calgary’s most significant human waste in public areas occur mainly in the downtown area, most noticeably in the lanes of the East Village, 17th Avenue areas, and other areas with a concentration of bars and nightclubs (personal correspondence, May 31, 2005).

The City of Calgary currently employs crews from its Roads Department to clean up human waste in streets on a by-complaint basis, in addition to their regular street cleaning schedules. On average, the City receives ten or less calls a year regarding human waste complaints. However, this number does not represent the total number of incidents (C. Alanen, personal communication, May 31, 2005).

Currently, no city-provided public toilets exist in the East Village for its population to use. According to Malcolm Ho-You, a Senior Urban Designer at the City of Calgary, there is just one public toilet to serve the whole of downtown Calgary (personal correspondence, May 30, 2005). This toilet is located at Olympic Plaza (one block west of the East Village) but its obscure location makes it little-known. Washrooms at City Hall are open for public use from 6 am to 5 pm, seven days a week but are locked after-hours.

At the Drop-in Centre – one of the two main homeless shelters in the East Village – Director of Programming, Debbie Newman, says that washroom facilities are open 24 hours a day except for two hours on Friday. She acknowledges that lane going is a problem in the East Village but questions whether public toilets would help the situation. She believes that those with serious chronic addiction and mental health issues may forgo the option of using toilets and continue to use the lanes (personal correspondence, June 24, 2005).

Teri Baylis, Program Director at the Salvation Army's Center of Hope (the other homeless shelter in the East Village), says that the Centre of Hope has three women's stalls available around the clock, seven days a week and one public shower that is available from 7 am to 7 pm. There are five men's stalls and two public showers, which have the same operating times. These services serve 2000 people. Again, Baylis stresses that not everyone may use the toilet options even if the access is there but also welcomes the provision of extra toilets in the area (personal correspondence, June 28 & 29, 2005).

This report recognizes that the factors that bring about and the issues that arise out of public toilet provision are part of larger social issues that include

substance addiction, mental illness, and housing availability. The need for public toilets in the East Village also poses certain questions, which have yet to be answered, such as:

- Is lane going in the East Village predominantly a *daytime* or *nighttime* issue?
- *Where* is human waste most commonly found and *how often* does it occur?
- *Who* is lane going: is lane going the action of certain individuals or is it a widespread problem for the entire population? Does the problem stem from individuals not being able to use available toilet facilities in time, toilet facilities not being conveniently located, or from individuals who will use continue to use lanes regardless of whether there are toilet facilities or not?

A preliminary analysis of the frequency, time, and location of lane going in the East Village to answer these questions should be done before other factors such as where and how many toilets are needed can be assessed (the City of Vancouver is considering hiring a consultant to do this in Vancouver; see section 2.3.1 for further details).

2.0 Report Objectives and Methodology

2.1 Objectives

This objective of this report is to closely examine seven alternatives for public toilet use in the East Village. These alternatives range from short-term solutions (washroom amenities that can be provided immediately but are not permanent) to long-term solutions (permanent amenities). No recommendations will be made as to what a best-fit solution for the East Village should be as the researcher feels a final solution must take into consideration planning, Council, financial and other considerations that are beyond the scope of this report.

The examined alternatives are:

1. Street Cleaning;
2. Portable Toilets;
3. Hotel Facilities;
4. Supervised Public Toilets;
5. Hygiene Centers/Toilet Palaces;
6. Automatic Public Toilets (APTs); and
7. The UriLift

Each alternative includes the following topics:

- Definition;
- Practices in Various Cities;
- Advantages;
- Disadvantages and Issues;
- Cost and Financing; and
- Additional Resources (which includes direct links to suppliers, key

contact people, et cetera. The articles referenced in each section can be found in the Works Cited page at the end of this report).

2.2 Resources

Information for this report was collected from:

- Telephone and e-mail interviews with waste management professionals in various cities, City of Calgary employees, and representatives of the Calgary Drop-In Centre and Salvation Army Centre of Hope;
- Reviews of conference papers and texts related to public toilet services; and
- Reviews of public Internet documents and articles concerning public toilet issues.

2.3 Case Studies

Research for this report looked at various case studies and practices in:

- Australia: Perth;
- Canada: Vancouver;
- The Netherlands: Amsterdam, Den Hague, Rotterdam;
- The United Kingdom: Aviemore, Belfast, Cambridge, London, Reading; and
- The United States: Boston, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, San Antonio, San Francisco, Seattle.

2.3.1 The Case of Vancouver

Vancouver's experience with public toilets is worth paying particular attention to. It will be referenced quite often in this report due to the direness of its human waste situation – which has been a noticeable problem for the past three to four years – and the City of Vancouver's pro-active response to it, particularly in the Downtown Eastside neighbourhood.

The Downtown Vancouver Improvement Association, tourists, and residents have all complained about the human waste situation around the Downtown Eastside and Granville strip corridor due to drug users, homeless persons, and party-goers. The City of Vancouver has hired Bob Ross, a consultant, to act as the Engineering Department's representative for looking into various public disorder issues, including the issue of lane going. Ross is currently exploring several options and this report will reference many of his key findings.

According to *The Vancouver Courier*, the City of Vancouver may also potentially “hire a [consultant] to track the growing problem of human feces and urine piling up in alleys in the Downtown Eastside and Granville strip corridor” to see where the greatest frequency of problems lie (Howell, 2005, May 16a). The City of Calgary may wish to consider doing the same in the future should the human waste problem in the East Village continue to escalate.

3.0 Public Toilet Alternatives

3.1 Short Term: Street Cleaning



a.



b.



c.

Top to bottom:
 a. MID cleanup ambassador in Seattle
 b. Example of street cleaning services in New York City
 c. High pressure washing of streets in Seattle

3.1.1 Definition

Street cleaning typically involves the removal and disposal of human waste from streets and the high pressure washing of the streets afterwards. Sometimes the removal of waste is eschewed in favour of flushing streets with water to ensure that all waste flows to sewers.

3.1.2 Practices in Various Cities

Seattle:

- 90 businesses hire a private social enterprise called CleanScapes to remove trash and human waste, and to clean, power wash, and manage streets (e.g. install lighting, repave streets) in the Pioneer Square district. (CleanScapes does not currently service any Canadian cities although they would consider expanding their services north if the demand existed).
- The Metropolitan Improvement District or MID (a business improvement association in downtown Seattle) hires a force of cleanup and safety ambassadors who bag and dispose of human waste and “flush the spot with a truck-mounted power washer” in 210 downtown blocks (B. Ross, personal communication, June 3, 2005).

Vancouver:

- The Gastown Business Improvement Association (BIA) is considering using a social enterprise similar to CleanScapes. This plan would employ the services of the United We Can Bottle Depot street cleaning agency – a bottle recycling depot in the Downtown Eastside. This agency currently does not handle fecal matter clean up but the BIA would consider training people so they could or use City crews to power wash contaminated areas (B. Ross, personal communication, July 19, 2005).

3.1.3 Advantages

- Targets problems in a timely and efficient fashion.
- Cost-effective if incidents of public defecation and urination are relatively low.
- Potential to co-operate with and enhance community economic development projects.

3.1.4 Disadvantages and Issues

- A short-term solution because the street remains, in essence, the public toilet. Could potentially be a long-term solution but still does not solve the problem of not providing a proper and permanent facility for basic human needs.
- If waste isn't bagged away and merely flushed down streets, human waste matter can flow to sewer catch basins and given an irregular basin, could sit there for long periods (Howell, 2005, May 16a).

3.1.5 Cost and Financing

- *Seattle:* 90 customers in the Pioneer Square district pay CleanScapes \$24 USD/hour (\$29.58 CAD³) for basic hand crews and \$82.50 USD/hour (\$101.67 CAD) for mechanized and hazardous materials clean-up crews. Costs can vary depending on the frequency of service and the issues in a particular lane (C. Martin, personal communication, June 23, 2005).
- *Seattle:* The MID is “a non-profit organization who is financed through a self-tax assessment on downtown properties. All assessments are collected by the City of Seattle and re-distributed back to the MID” to pay for safety and cleanup ambassadors (S. Walls, personal communication, June 28, 2005).
- *Vancouver:* If brought into existence, Vancouver’s lane cleaning enterprise can be done by the United We Can Bottle Depot street cleaning agency, who are currently given a \$70,000 per year grant by the City of Vancouver (B. Ross, personal communication, June 3, 2005).

3.1.6 Additional Resources

Web sites:

CleanScapes web site: <http://www.cleanscapes.com/index.html>

Seattle MID: <http://www.downtownseattle.com/content/programs/MIDOverview.cfm>

Key Contacts:

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³ All currency conversions in this report were done in June and July, 2005 using <http://www.xe.com>

3.2

Short Term:
Portable Toilets



a.



b.



c.

Top to bottom:
a., c. Examples of multiple portable toilets
b. Hand washing station outside of portable toilet

3.2.1 Definition

Portable toilets or “porta-potties” are toilets that use chemicals to control odor and disinfect. They are usually found with the most basic of amenities (e.g. toilet paper) although separate hand washing stations can be obtained as well.

3.2.2 Practices in Various Cities

San Antonio:

- Installed ten porta-potties near areas where the greatest concentrations of homeless people are found, such as under major highway bridges.
- Porta-potties are only a temporary measure though and work concurrently with a ten-year plan to increase funding to the city’s largest homeless shelter (S. Ives, personal communication, May 24, 2005).

Vancouver:

- Porta-potties were placed in a Downtown Eastside alley on a trial run (in 2001). The program no longer exists.
- Initiative was advocated by the Vancouver Area Network of Drug Users (VANDU) which was concerned with the lack of public toilet facilities at night (Kerr et al, 2001).
- Porta-potties were supervised by two people

(to reduce criminal activity), who were often drug addicts themselves but could keep an eye out on each other (B. Ross, personal communication, May 24, 2005).

- Porta-potties were in operation from 6 pm to 6 am each day. From 6 am to 6 pm, the City would take them away to be emptied (B. Ross, personal communication, May 24, 2005).

3.2.3 Advantages

- Represents the first step in showing communities that human waste issues are being addressed.
- Provides a quick and mobile solution where public toilets are lacking.
- Presents job creation opportunities and enables members of the community to be part of the solution.

3.2.4 Disadvantages and Issues

- *Vancouver*: porta-potties can become a hot spot for drug injection and prostitution; these issues are a deterrent to the installation of unsupervised toilets in the Downtown Eastside (B. Ross, personal communication, July 25, 2005).
- If there is no hand-washing facility, there is the risk of increased disease transmission.
- Daily supervision, cleaning, and trucking can be costly.

3.2.5 Cost and Financing

- *Vancouver:* Supervisors were paid \$8 an hour.
- *Vancouver:* To rent, supervise, clean, and transport the porta-potties cost \$8200 CAD per month (B. Ross, personal communication, July 19, 2005).

3.2.6 Additional Resources

Web site:

A Case Study on VANDU (see page 27 for more details on the supervised toilet project): http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/hepc/hepatitis_c/pdf/vanduStudy.pdf

Key Contact:

Bob Ross

Title: Contractor, City of Vancouver Engineering Department

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3.3 Mid Term: Hotel Facilities



a.



b.



c.

Top to bottom:
a. – c. Examples of
washroom facilities in
moderately-priced
hotels

3.3.1 Definition

Using hotel toilet facilities as public toilets at night would extend the toilet services hotels provide during the day and would continue to employ the hotel staff already there. This idea could also be extended to opening toilets in other facilities such as train stations and government buildings (B. Ross, personal communication, May 24, 2005).

3.3.2 Practices in Various Cities

Vancouver:

- This is an idea proposed by Bob Ross for the City of Vancouver. It is one option out of several alternatives and has not yet been implemented (B. Ross, personal communication, May 24, 2005).

Other Cities:

- At the time of research, the researcher could find no evidence of other cities having put the idea of using hotel facilities as public toilets into action.
- *San Antonio:* established a downtown parking garage washroom as a toilet for homeless people (which was inaccessible from 9 pm to 6 am) (S. Ives, personal communication, May 24, 2005).

3.3.3 Advantages

- Makes use of existing services without having to incur the cost of building a public toilet and hiring additional supervisors.
- Provides people with several location alternatives for nighttime washroom use.

3.3.4 Disadvantages and Issues

- High number of these arrangements needed could make this a very expensive solution.

3.3.5 Cost and Financing

- *Vancouver:* Bob Ross estimates that each hotel-toilet operation would cost \$4000 CAD per month for supervision costs and that ten of these operations are needed for Vancouver.
- Municipalities would pay each hotel for the cost of supervision and cleaning.
- Clara Greed (a Professor of Inclusive Urban Planning) suggests offering rate and tax allowances, direct payment, and grants to businesses and organizations for the use of public toilets in their buildings (Greed, 2003b, p. 249).

3.3.6 Additional Resources

Key Contact:

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3.4 Long Term: Supervised Public Toilets



a.



b.



c.

Top to bottom:
 a. Exterior of supervised toilets at Main and Hastings, Vancouver
 b. Interior of supervised toilets at Hamilton and Hastings, Vancouver
 c. Vancouver toilet attendants

3.4.1 Definition

Supervised public toilets are public amenities usually provided for by municipalities. These toilets are usually supervised by male and female toilet attendants in order to deter various forms of crime that might occur if toilets were left unattended.

3.4.2 Practices in Various Cities

Cambridge:

- Used different design and management techniques in response to “anti-social” behaviour around public toilets and worked with different social agencies to ensure toilets were safer and more user friendly. Reports generally suggest they were successful in doing so.
- Some of these different techniques included:
 - “Removing the internal communal area and using single unisex cubicles”;
 - “Positing cubicles to provide the best natural surveillance”;
 - Establishing “vandal-resistant internal design and fittings”;
 - “Increasing visits to unattended facilities by grouping them and allocating an attendant”;
 - “Removing surfaces for preparation and hiding [of] drugs and needles”;
 - “Installing drug needle chutes from cubicles

directly into collection bins in the service area”; and

- Incorporating a kiosk “into the design of one new building to increase surveillance and security” (IDeA, n.d.).

Perth:

- Uses the following design techniques to reduce crime around public toilets:
 - Placing “public toilets near roads and busy footpaths with entrances facing out”;
 - “Cubicles...open on to open, visible spaces”;
 - Reducing problems through “the passive surveillance of passing traffic, vehicles or pedestrians”; and
 - Building “toilets as close as possible to busy thoroughfares with entrances facing them” (Post Newspapers, 2003, March 1).

Vancouver:

- Of all major Canadian cities examined, Vancouver has the greatest number of public toilets (two) but they are closed after 6 pm (Howell, 2005, May 16a).
- The two under street public toilets in operation are: Victory Square (on Hastings and Hamilton) and Main and Hastings. They service up to 1,500 people a day.
- Toilets are open seven days a week, from 6 am to 6 pm and are supervised by attendants who keep the washrooms clean and guard against drug use.
- Local residents use the toilets as well as people who commute into the area to shop and socialize (B. Ross,

personal communication, May 24, 2005).

- Vancouver has three parks washrooms in the Downtown Eastside area. Two are supervised by city staff, one is not. The rest of the washrooms in the City's Parks Department are checked by independent cleaning contractors daily.
- The Parks Department is looking at other ways to maintain their washrooms. Some solutions include hiring a community group to look after toilets in exchange for storage space there or reimbursing caretakers through a "taxable benefit of a suite to live in at the park" (M. Stairs, personal communication, May 26, 2005).

3.4.3 Advantages

- *Vancouver:* Underground washrooms in Vancouver were successful in keeping a no-tolerance policy. With added police support, they are fairly secure (B. Ross, personal correspondence, May 24, 2005).
- Increases local employment.
- Supervisors can deter crime and subsequently, cost of crime is lowered (e.g. cost of vandalism clean-up); supervisors stand as a symbol of restored order and good social organization (Greed, 2003a).
- Good public toilet architecture can signify government faith in a redevelopment and could increase property values (Greed, 2003a)⁴.
- Potential to increase interlinkages between social agencies and look at public toilet misuse as symptomatic of larger issues as was the case in Cambridge.

⁴ This has been shown to be the case in London (Notting Hill), New York, Paris, and Rio de Janeiro.

- Doesn't ignore the social problems that do exist (i.e. by shutting down toilets, which is a common response) but works with issues at hand.

3.4.4 Disadvantages and Issues

- Not open 24 hours a day, leaving no toilet alternatives after a certain time in the day.
- Concerns for establishing all-day toilets include: drug activity and sales, loitering, sleeping, vandalism, prostitution, and other sexual activity occurring around toilets.
- Toilets, if not properly monitored and with no safe injection sites available, can be used as a site to shoot up. Although blue lighting can discourage this (making it hard to see one's veins), people have gotten around this solution by using highlighters (Public Health Agency of Canada, n.d.).
- Safety issues for toilet attendants if toilets were to be opened during the nighttime (B. Ross, personal correspondence, May 24, 2005).

3.4.5 Cost and Financing

- *Cambridge*: £250,000 (\$563,339 CAD) for a four-year program.
- *Vancouver*: Supervision cost is \$100,000 CAD per year per location with one male and female attendant for each location, for twelve hours of operation a day, 365 days a year (including maintenance costs) (B. Ross, personal correspondence, May 24, 2005).

3.4.6 Additional Resources

Web sites:

A Year of Liveability Challenges 2004-05: A sample of local authorities and communities working together to make communities safer in the U.K.:
<http://www.idea-knowledge.gov.uk/idk/core/page.do?pagelid=1>

Comfort Stations: A look at supervised public toilets in Vancouver:
<http://www.city.vancouver.bc.ca/engsvcs/streets/furniture/Washrooms.htm>

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3.5 Long Term: Hygiene Centers/ Toilet Palaces



a.



b.



c.

Top to bottom:

- a. The Julie Apartments, Seattle
- b. The Urban Rest Stop, Seattle
- c. Interior of the Urban Rest Stop

3.5.1 Definition

Hygiene centers and toilet palaces provide not only toilet services but are large enough to contain a diversification of other services and can serve as a focal point of a community. Hygiene centers (also known as urban rest stops) contain showers while toilet palaces do not. Both can provide small retail services (e.g. groceries, coffee kiosks) and amenity services, such as bus timetables and telephones. Some have space for a local “cop shop” where police can station themselves and be a visible presence in the community (Greed, 2003a &b, p. 182).

3.5.2 Practices in Various Cities

Aviemore:

- Toilet palace combines public toilet and retail area uses and employs multiple “supervisors” in the form of washroom attendants and retail clerks who keep an eye on toilets and one main supervised entrance (Greed, 2003a &b, p. 182).

Seattle:

- In 2000, opened two hygiene centers downtown: The Urban Rest Stop has a predominantly male clientele and The Wellness Center has a predominantly female one.
- The Urban Rest Stop is open weekdays 5:30 am to 9:30 pm and weekends 8 am to 5 pm. The Wellness

Center is open 7 am to 6 pm on weekdays and 7:30 am to 3:30 pm on weekends.

- Both hygiene centers are free services: access to toilets, showers, laundry services, and free personal hygiene and laundry supplies are provided.
- The Urban Rest Stop is a converted apartment building (the Julie Apartments) with a grocery store on the main level, shower facilities in the basement, and 47 low-income apartments on the top floors.
- Both hygiene centers are well used: The Urban Rest Stop averages 2000 showers each month and The Wellness Center averages 420 showers. Clients make appointments to use The Wellness Center and roughly 30 to 40% of clients use it as a place to prepare themselves before work (Parker, 2000, July 6).
- The Wellness Center serves only 12 to 15 clients at a time to enable its clients to spend longer times there and to give each individual more attention.
- The Urban Rest Stop is managed by the Low Income Housing Institute (a non-profit group) and The Wellness Center by the Archdiocesan Housing Authority – a Catholic organization (Kaiman, 2000, February 21).

3.5.3 Advantages

- Toilet palaces create economic opportunities (e.g. retail) and have multiple uses, potentially creating more “eyes on the street”.
- Places like The Wellness Center give clients more time to attend to hygiene and have their emotional needs attended to as well.

- Hygiene centers offer a greater range of services than a basic public toilet can.
- Hygiene center and toilet palaces can become community amenities in the long term.

3.5.4 Disadvantages and Issues

- *Seattle*: Downtown business community was very opposed to having one large hygiene center (as was initially proposed) due to concerns of having too great a concentration of homeless persons in one area (Kaiman, 2000, February 21).
- Not open 24 hours a day, leaving no toilet alternatives after a certain time in the day.

3.5.5 Cost and Funding

- *Seattle*: Purchasing and operational costs for both centers in 2000 were as follows (in \$ USD):

Urban Rest Stop purchasing and starting costs	\$465,000
Urban Rest Stop operating cost	\$117,000
Wellness Center construction costs	\$249,000
Wellness Center operating cost	\$200,000
TOTAL	\$1,031,000 (or \$1,280,922 CAD)

- *Seattle*: The Department of Housing and Urban Development of Seattle funds both hygiene centers in addition to private donors (private donors: businesses, churches and individuals) and the Downtown Seattle Association (The Urban Rest Stop, n.d.; Parker, 2000, July 6).

- *Seattle*: Funding for the hygiene centers came from an increased property tax for a special housing levy to create housing for the homeless (which Seattle citizens voted for in a ballot proposition). The Department of Housing and Human Services administers this fund (Brown, K., 1999, July/August).
- *Seattle*: Hygiene and cosmetic products are donated.

3.5.6 Additional Resources

Web site:

Seattle's Urban Rest Stop: <http://www.lihi.org/pages/RestStop.htm>

3.6 Long Term: Automatic Public Toilets (APTs)



a.



b.



c.

Top to bottom:

a. APT in Boston

b. Example of APT interior

c. APT in Pittsburgh

3.6.1 Definition

Automatic Public Toilets (or APTs) are self-contained units that usually contain an automatic sink and self-cleaning toilets and floors. They are one of the most common public toilet solutions found in major North American municipalities. Operational lengths can be set for an average of 8 to 20 minutes. After each use, the unit disinfects itself for about 40 to 50 seconds and is then dried with a high pressure blower (Greater Boston, 2002, July 23). A technician comes every few days (as needed) for maintenance. Some cities charge a quarter for entry and provide tokens for those who cannot afford it.

3.6.2 Practices in Various Cities

American Cities:

- Several American cities have installed APTs as of April, 2005: San Francisco (25), Seattle (5), Boston (8), Los Angeles (contract for 150), and Pittsburgh (1) (Ives, 2005, April 11).

Pittsburgh:

- Has contract with major street furniture contractor, Clear Channel Adshel, for 350 bus shelters, bicycle racks, litter bins, kiosks, ash urns, benches, and APTs for free in exchange for advertising on the street furniture. Vancouver has considered a similar contract.

- The APTs have two-way emergency communication capabilities and training was provided to the city’s firefighters and paramedics on how the units function (Fuoco, 2003, February 12).

San Antonio:

- Was offered a similar contract to Pittsburgh’s by Clear Channel Adshel but the city’s historical design review commission turned it down (S. Ives, personal communication, May 24, 2005).

United Kingdom Cities:

- Local authorities rent APTs through toilet franchising firms and some are even designing and building their own APTs (Greed, 2003b, p. 144).

3.6.3 Advantages

- Can serve as symbol of a rejuvenated area and restore civic pride.
- A 24-hour operation: can be used at nighttime.
- Suitable for use by wheelchair users and parents with small children.
- Some APT manufacturers offer emergency support 24 hours a day through emergency panic buttons in the APTs.

3.6.4 Disadvantages and Issues

- *Boston:* critics thought that advertising on APTs would cause “visual clutter” (Greater Boston, 2002, July 23).
- *San Francisco:* Experienced problems of drug dealing, prostitution, people sleeping in APTs through prying doors open and jamming

doors shut, and vandalism. Local residents don't want these toilets in their neighbourhoods due to these problems. APTs in tourist areas are not abused as such (Lelchuk, 2002, July 1).

- *Seattle*: Some APTs are in constant use and not very clean inside (B. Ross, personal communication, June 3, 2005).
- *United Kingdom*: APT publicity campaigns and education programs were needed to show people how to use the APTs and subdue fears that one would get locked inside one (Greed, 2003b, p. 244).
- Some cities have dealt with drug activity, prostitution, and loitering in and around APTs with bans on loitering within 20 feet of APTs and banning more than one person at a time in the APTs. They are enforced with fines of up to \$100 USD; this has raised concerns about civil liberties (Gordon, 2001, October 11; Lelchuk, 2001, October 3).
- High initial costs.
- Pay APTs raise concerns about discriminating against women and disabled people (in that men can refuse to pay and urinate anywhere) (Webber, 2001, July 15).
- May be insufficient for high-volume usage (Greed, 2003b, p. 199).

3.6.5 Cost and Financing

- Costs range anywhere from \$200,000 CAD (Viacom Decaux) to \$300,000 CAD (Clear Channel Adshel) for one unit.
- *Philadelphia*: Considered a proposal that would entail a “one-time fee of \$350,000 USD (\$429,448 CAD) plus free regular maintenance...in exchange for advertising” (American Restroom Association, n.d.).
- *Pittsburgh*: APTs are free in exchange for advertising.

- *Seattle*: decided not to opt for advertising revenues and instead financed their APTs through sewer revenues (Mulady, 2004, March 2).
- Many cities' APTs are operated by the APT companies themselves, whose revenue comes from advertising. For example, Clear Channel Adshel offers APTs that “can be installed as part of a leasing arrangement or civic advertising partnership, either individually or alongside other Adshel street furniture”.

3.6.6 Additional Resources

Web sites (of different APT manufacturers):

Clear Channel Adshel (Canada): <http://www.adshel.com/>

Healthmatic (United Kingdom): <http://www.healthmatic.com/>

Viacom Decaux (Canada): http://www.viacomoutdoor.ca/mc_home.html

3.7 Long Term: The UriLift



a.



b.



c.

Top to bottom:

a. The UriLift before activation in Den Haag, The Netherlands

b. The UriLift above ground

c. The UriLift in an urban streetscape

3.7.1 Definition

The UriLift is a stainless steel retractable urinal that comes above ground during peak times. An attendant pushes a button to bring it above or underground. Above ground, it requires a space of approximately 2 m². Once underground, only its cover is visible (and is stored in a 1.3 m deep hole); Up to three men can use it at once and it is self-cleaning. Maintenance and extra cleaning occurs once a month for one hour.

Currently, there are no UriLifts in Canada, although the UriLift company has international partners they could distribute through to the North American market (W. Hermans, personal correspondence, June, 2005).

3.7.2 Practices in Various Cities

European Cities:

- Several European cities have recently installed UriLifts: Amsterdam (5), Rotterdam (15), Den Hague (5), United Kingdom (7 in London, Westminster, Belfast, and Reading). Most responses have been favourable with most cities buying multiple units after a trial run.
- *Reading:* found UriLifts were well used and seldom vandalized (BBC, 2002, April 30). The UriLift was greeted as a source of civic pride.⁵

⁵For an example of the celebrations that greeted the UriLift in Reading, see www.getreading.co.uk/pfriendly.asp?intid=3437

- *London*: council workers operate the UriLifts from between 7 pm and 6 am in response to a bylaw that makes urination in streets a punishable offence with a £500 fine. They are located in hot spots such as Westminster and Soho (Lydall, 2002, November 1).

3.7.3 Advantages

- Nighttime solution – good for addressing when problems frequently occur.
- Out of sight when not needed during daytime.
- Difficult to cause damage to.
- Can be moved and reinstalled in another location (e.g. if a street is being repaired) (UriLift International BV, n.d.).
- Quick installation time (two hours).
- Compact and does not require a large land area.

3.7.4 Disadvantages and Issues

- Does not solve the problem of street defecation.
- Is not an alternative suitable for women users.

3.7.5 Cost and Financing

- The cost of one unit is €35000 (\$50,000 CAD).
- Units have been sold as part of contracts between cities and outdoor advertising companies (with no ad sales involved); Viacom Decaux has been interested in distributing UriLift (W. Hermans, personal correspondence, June, 2005).

3.7.6 Additional Resources

Web sites:

UriLift: <http://www.urilift.nl>

Healthmatic (UriLift's UK supplier): <http://www.healthmatic.com/Urilift.htm>

Key Contact:

Wim Hermans

Title: UriLift Salesman

Location: Netherlands

E-mail Address: info@urilift.nl

Telephone Number: +31-6-53328302

4.0 Conclusion

This report has found that some common concerns over public toilets are: misuse of toilets for illicit activities, the cost of providing such a social amenity, and the inability of some public toilet alternatives to be nighttime solutions, which is often when lane going is likely to occur. However, some alternatives, if designed and integrated within the community effectively, can prove to be opportunities to create employment, facilitate safety, and generate community and civic pride.

The alternatives are numerous for the East Village but a human waste assessment, in addition to a consideration of the following factors should be completed before a final decision on the best alternative (and where toilets are placed) can be made:

- Area demographics;
- Pedestrian “movement patterns, nodal points, centers and interchanges”;
- “Main area magnet land uses and types of development” (existing and future);
- “Surrounding constraints” such as general ambiance, parking, and residential areas;
- “Cultural, historical, heritage factors that might enhance situation”; (Greed, C., 2003b, p. 153, 176, 186 &189) and
- Community consultation.

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6.0 Summary Table of Public Toilet Alternatives

Type of Approach (time range of approach)	Cases	Context	Issues (Advantages and Disadvantages)	Strategies (Costs)
Street Cleaning (short term)	Seattle, Vancouver	Street cleaning involves the flushing / removal and disposal of human waste followed by high pressure washing of streets afterwards.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Efficient • Cost-effective if incidents of public defecation and urination are low • Potential for community economic development projects • Does not solve problem of not having a proper toilet 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Seattle</i>: \$29.58 CAD for basic hand crews and \$101.67 CAD for hazardous materials clean-up crews
Portable Toilets (short term)	San Antonio, Vancouver	Portable toilets use chemicals to control odor and disinfect. Separate hand washing stations are available to rent as well. Often require supervision.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quick and mobile solution • Presents job creation opportunities • Can become hot spot for drug injection and prostitution • If no hand-washing facility, there is risk of increased disease transmission • Daily supervision, cleaning, and trucking can be costly 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Vancouver</i>: Supervisors were paid \$8 an hour • <i>Vancouver</i>: To rent, supervise, clean, and transport the porta-potties cost \$8200 CAD per month
Hotel Facilities (mid term)	Vancouver, San Antonio	Hotel toilet facilities can be used as public toilets at night. Other facilities such as train stations and government buildings could also be used.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No additional cost of building public toilet and hiring additional supervisors • Gives several location alternatives for washroom use • High number of these toilets needed makes it expensive solution 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Vancouver</i>: Each hotel-toilet operation would cost ~\$4000 CAD per month for supervision costs • Cities can offer rate and tax allowances, direct payment, and grants to businesses and organizations for the use of public toilets in their buildings
Supervised Public Toilets (long term)	Cambridge, UK Perth, Australia Vancouver	Supervised toilets are usually supervised by male and female toilet attendants in order to deter various forms of crime.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can be fairly secure • Increase local employment • Good public toilet architecture helps spur urban redevelopment • Works with issues at hand • Not open 24 hours a day - Possible occurrence of: drug activity and sales, loitering, sleeping, vandalism, prostitution, and other sexual activity around toilet 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Cambridge</i>: \$563,339 CAD for four-year program • <i>Vancouver</i>: Supervision cost is \$100,000 CAD per year

Hygiene Centers/Toilet Palaces (long term)	Seattle	Hygiene centers and toilet palaces provide not only toilet services but are large enough to contain a diversification of other services (i.e. coffee kiosk) and can serve as a focal point of a community.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create economic opportunities • Multiple uses • Users have more time to attend to needs • Can become community amenities in the long term • Not open 24 hours a day, leaving no toilet alternatives after certain time in the day 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Seattle</i>: Purchasing and operational costs for 2000 was \$1,280,922 CAD • <i>Seattle</i>: The Department of Housing and Urban Development of Seattle funds its hygiene centers in addition to private donors
Automatic Public Toilets (APTs) (long term)	San Francisco, Seattle, Boston, Los Angeles, Pittsburgh	Automatic Public Toilets (or APTs) are self-contained units that usually contain an automatic sink and self-cleaning toilets and floors.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can restore civic pride • Can be used at nighttime • Suitable for use by wheelchair users and parents with small children • Problems of drug dealing, prostitution, people sleeping in APTs, and vandalism • High initial costs • Pay APTs raise concerns about discriminating against women and disabled • May be insufficient for high-volume usage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Costs range anywhere from \$200,000 CAD (Viacom Decaux) to \$300,000 CAD • Some cities have agreements for free APTs in exchange for advertising
The UriLift (long term)	Amsterdam, Rotterdam, The Hague, London, UK	The UriLift is a stainless steel retractable urinal that comes above ground during peak times. Up to three men can use it at once and it is self-cleaning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nighttime • Out of sight when not needed during daytime • Difficult to cause damage to • Quick installation time (two hours) • Compact and does not require a large land area • Does not solve problem of street defecation • Is not an alternative suitable for women users 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The cost of one unit is \$50,000 CAD • Units have been sold as part of contracts between cities and outdoor advertising companies